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ABSTRACT

A useful or adaptable strategy for coping with the limitations of a small college speech department is the process of developing a symbiotic relationship among grants, publications, and teaching. While using their training, special interests, and institutional setting, educators can (1) draw on the course materials and teaching experiences from existing courses or new courses in order to formulate research ideas; (2) tap the financial resources of the home institution, private foundations, and government grants in order to help underwrite the cost of expensive research; and (3) target appropriate journals or conventions, which may not be speech related, in order to maximize on the symbiosis between an article or paper and the journals' or conventions' special interests. (HOD)

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SPEECH SOLILOQUY IN A LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGE

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"The Small Department: Achieving a Professional Profession"
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SPEECH SOLILOQUY IN A LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGE

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To those of us who make our livings from talking and from teaching students how to talk, it may seem strange to title a paper a "Speech Soliloquy in a Liberal Arts College." Having posited that paradox, and true to my professional calling, allow me to talk about it in more detail. The small department in my case is very small. Actually, I am the "one man speech department" at Washington and Lee University, which is a university by virtue of its law school. W&L is a liberal arts school for men with an undergraduate enrollment of 1,300. For those of you interested in organizational flow charts, I am "administratively attached" to the English department, but my office and classrooms are located in the mathematics building. By now, it is becoming clear to all of you why I titled my paper a Speech Soliloquy: as Webster defines it, my professional life consists of the "Act of talking to oneself." Since some of us are in small departments, or subsumed in English or theatre departments, or totally alone, and without the benefit of the sheer number of professional peers with whom one can interact in large departments, it may be useful and advantageous for those of us so situated to share our coping experiences so that we may learn and profit from others' successes in achieving a professional profession in the small speech department.

From the many facets of being a speech professional—teaching, coaching debate and individual events speaking, public service, convention papers, consultation, etc.—I wish to focus on two: grants and publications. As I review my many early failures and few late successes in grants and publications, I think the story with which

Booker T. Washington began his "Atlanta Exposition Address" in 1895 is most instructive. You will remember that a ship was lost at sea when it finally sighted a friendly vessel. The captain of the lost ship signalled, "Water, water; we die of thirst!" The answer from the friendly ship came back: "Cast down your buckets where you are." You will remember that when the crew finally did cast down their buckets, they were able to draw fresh water from the mouth of the Amazon River. The point of the Washington story was that when I began to cast down my bucket in terms of my institutional setting, and undergraduate and graduate training, I was better able to satisfy the thirst—which I am sure we all have to some degree these days—for grants and publications. So, what I want to do in the body of this paper is to discuss how one can cast down the bucket in the home institution. Hopefully, my experiences may be helpful and adaptable to your situations.

Discussion

In hindsight, I now recognize that I unwittingly developed, without purpose or design, a symbiotic relationship between teaching and grants and publishing. I want to stress that concept of symbiosis, the close association, the living together of dissimilar organisms. One of the advantages of being in a small department is the relative freedom in developing existing courses in one's own direction and/or proposing new courses in one's specialty. By capitalizing on this freedom, I was able to adapt an existing course—a performance related course in Persuasion—and teach a new course, so that I teach two courses in American public address: one from

1640 to 1930, and the other one from 1930 to the present [for which course I would like to plug my book, American Rhetoric from Roosevelt to Reagan]. I appropriately cast down my bucket in American public address; consequently, I taught those speakers and their speeches over and over until I had what I thought were some insights about their rhetoric, particularly about FDR's First and Fourth Inaugural Addresses. With a specific research proposal, which ensued from my teaching of those speeches, I applied to the Eleanor Roosevelt Institute for a grant to do research in the Roosevelt Library. After researching, then writing, and then revising, two articles on those inaugurals were published. The process then swung full circle to the symbiosis of teaching to grant to publication to teaching, again. There is some efficacy in reporting to one's chairperson or dean that not only is one published, perhaps with a grant, but also that one's work in the publication advances the classroom knowledge of one's students, as well as one's professional peers. Thus, the symbiosis obtains: whereas some would make a professional differentiation between teaching and publishing, these two facets—if they are dissimilar—can live in close and healthy association if they are conceived by casting down one's bucket in the institutional teaching situation. For example, this symbiotic relationship has provided research grants from two private foundations in the FDR and LBJ presidential libraries [and let me add that monies are available directly from many of the presidential libraries for research projects], W&L Glenn Grants for the Ford and Kennedy libraries [again, one's home institution is a good source for grant money,

especially when one can argue the symbiosis of a good grant proposal, which will hopefully be published, which will then improve one's teaching at the home institution]. Also, since most small departments are in relatively small institutions, the speech professional should consider the NEH Summer Seminar and Summer Stipend programs which are geared for professors like us.

But the principle of symbiosis can still be effective without the facet of grants. For instance, I wrote two articles on speech organizational patterns. These pieces evolved from my teaching speech texts as models for organizational strategies in the fundamentals course. And let me just say that as editor of the Virginia Journal of Communication—and there are many other state-sponsored speech journals—I would welcome short essays on similar instructional practices. Indeed, the state-level speech associations may be one of the worthwhile areas in which the small department speech professional can seek to establish a mutually beneficial symbiotic situation. Lastly, one should not overlook the research resources of the home institution. Granted, one may not have a University of Illinois library on the home campus, but many smaller institutions house special or unique collections which may be worth exploring. In my case, Washington and Lee has a large collection of one of the saints of the South, General Robert E. Lee. In my early days of casting about for a research idea, I thought of doing a piece on General Lee's speaking, but that came to naught for the lack of any speech text. However, I did find an interesting letter he wrote to the precursor of the present Virginia Education Association. The Virginia

Journal of Education was delighted with my "General Lee on Child Rearing and Education," and I humorously but truthfully relate that this was the only piece I never had to revise.

The last area in which one may develop one's professional talents is in the so-called "faculty development" programs like the ones offered by the Virginia Tidewater Consortium and the Great Lakes College Consortium. These faculy development institutes may serve speech professionals in at least two ways. First, one may participate in a program (one's institution will generally pay the $300-400. fees plus round-trip meals and lodgings) in order to gain professional growth and stimulation of the kind one does not necessarily gain at professional conventions. Second, one can possibly serve as a resource person on the home campus. In this instance, one might wish to interest an administrator in a short summer institute on campus. This approach serves more faculty members at a much cheaper cost by bringing established "names" to lead the institute. The speech teacher may be of particular benefit to the home campus in the role of a facilitator in conducting video taping sessions for the improvement of faculty lecturing skills. Without presuming on a colleague's subject matter, the skills of constructive criticism which we use to enhance our students' speaking behaviors can be transferred to our home faculties if we use them wisely and judiciously.

Conclusion

In closing, I would like to reiterate what may be a useful or adaptable strategy for coping with the limitations and advantages

of the small speech department. The process of developing a symbiotic relationship between teaching and grants and publications, and hopefully full circle to teaching again, while utilizing one's training, special interests, and institutional setting, can work: 1) draw on the course materials and teaching experiences from existing courses and/or new courses in order to formulate research ideas; 2) tap the financial resources of the home institution, private foundations, and government grants in order to help to underwrite the cost of expensive research; 3) target the appropriate journal or convention, which may not be a speech-related one, in order to maximize on the symbiosis between one's article or paper and the journal's or convention's special interests; and 4) hope. I can say from personal experience that the system does not work every time, but it does work enough of the time to make it helpful. And I am always encouraged by a thought from Oscar Wilde: "Those who never compete never know the sorrow of losing nor the joy of winning."

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